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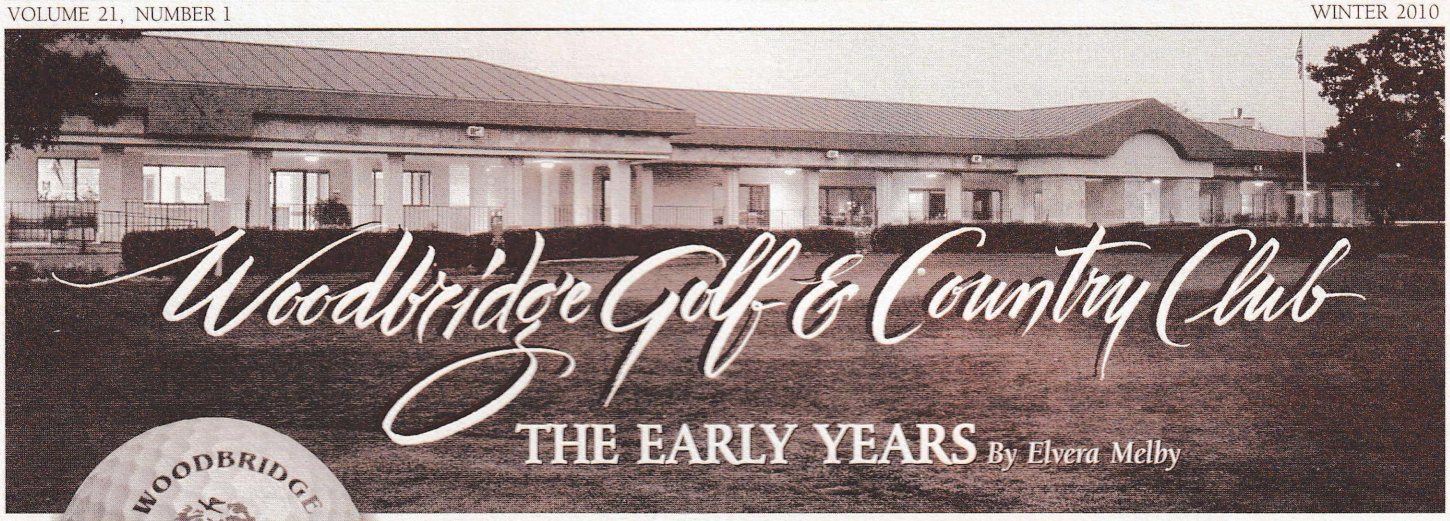
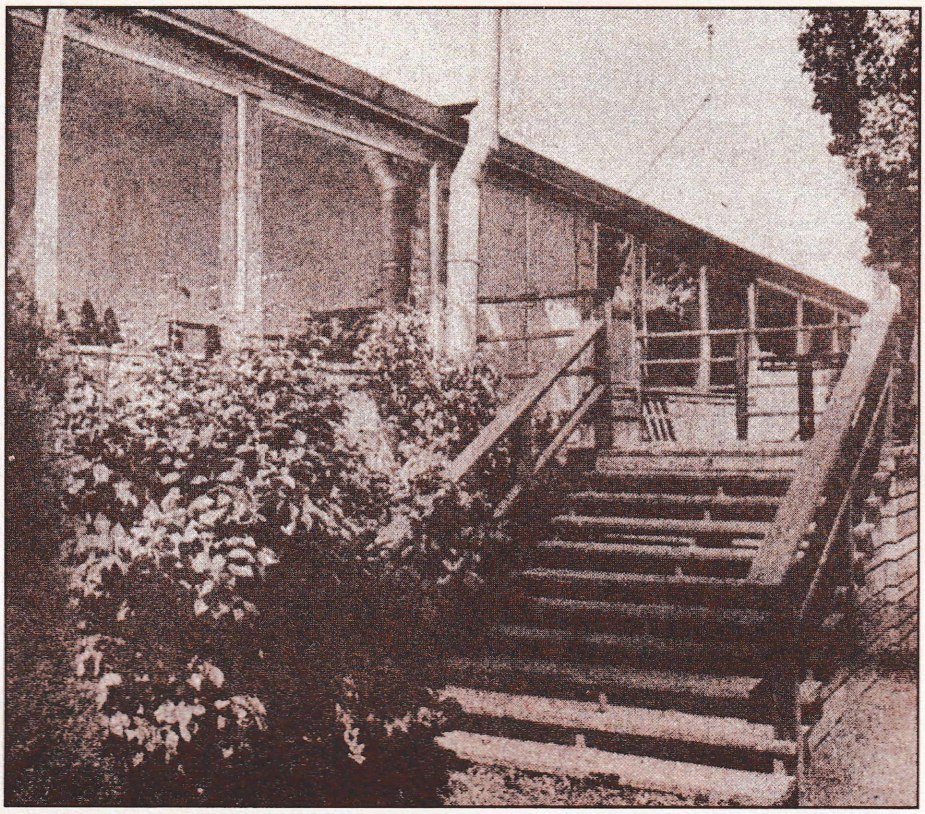


Woodbridge Golf & Country Club

THE EARLY YEARS *By Elvera Melby*

▲ ***Out of the Past*** – *The first clubhouse of the Woodbridge Golf and Country Club, located in the vicinity of the present Elk's Club in Woodbridge, was this two-room structure shown in a picture taken in 1935.*



▲ ***1938*** – *The second clubhouse of Woodbridge Golf and Country Club is presently the site of the Elks Lodge. The first clubhouse was little more than a shack built of 10x12 boards and batts, painted a muddy green and boasting a single window.*
Below: *Claude Holmes, First President, 1924.*

There is very little written as to the adversities experienced at Woodbridge Golf and Country Club in the very early years. We know hard times were prevalent during the Great Depression in 1929, and the 1930's was a dismal decade, followed by the 1940's - the frightening and difficult years of World War II. Certainly we can surmise there was not a surplus of available funds, no special equipment, little knowledge as to golf course design and at best, minimal interest in the game of golf by the general populace. But the intense desire to play golf prevailed. The founders were tenacious in accepting the challenge to see their dream become a reality and to instill in others a love for the wonderful game of golf.

It was a Saturday evening early in March, 1924 that the seed was sown for the development of the Woodbridge Golf and Country Club. Three gentlemen were sipping some 1922 Zinfandel wine when the conversation turned to golf. Mr. Claude Holmes happened to be one of those gentlemen. To travel to Stockton to play golf was just too time consuming, and he decided the pasture land he was renting from the Thompson-Folger estate, along the Mokelumne River, might just lend itself very adequately for a small golf course. And before the evening ended, he had challenged his two friends, Emerson "Em" Herrick and Dr. Chester "Doc" Hare, to a golf game to be played the following morning in Woodbridge.

The fact that no golf course existed in Woodbridge at that time did not dampen the spirits of the three enthusiastic would-be golfers. The next morning, hoping to rectify this minor flaw in their plans, they arrived at the pasture land equipped with shovels, rakes, lawn mowers, brooms, and wheelbarrows.

It was decided the area best

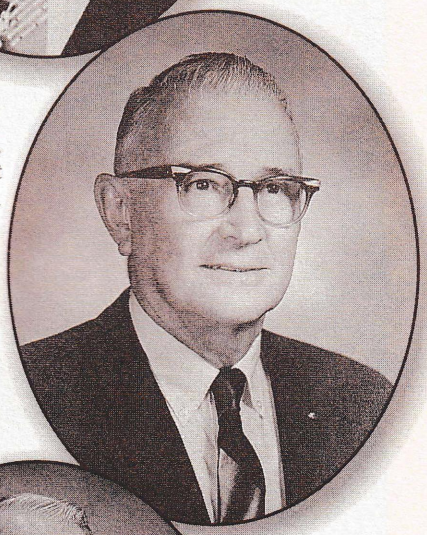
LODI NEWS SENTINEL

October 18, 1952

Open House at the Woodbridge Golf and Country Club from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday will disclose such scenes as this – the new bridge spanning the Mokelumne River and connecting the south and north portions of the expanded club – to the public.. Actually the Open House is to view the progress shown by the Mokelumne Land & River Development Co., which made possible the expansion of the club from a 9 to an 18-hole layout. Visitors will be shown a country club in action.

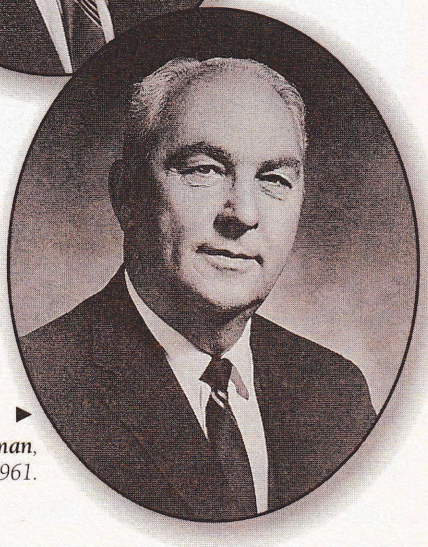
Miniature Golden Gate Bridge – the new footbridge is built on the same lines as the famed suspension span. Designed to accommodate foursomes, it will handle up to 50 persons at a time, and is constructed of heart redwood and steel.

David Ritchie, *President 1934 - 1943.*

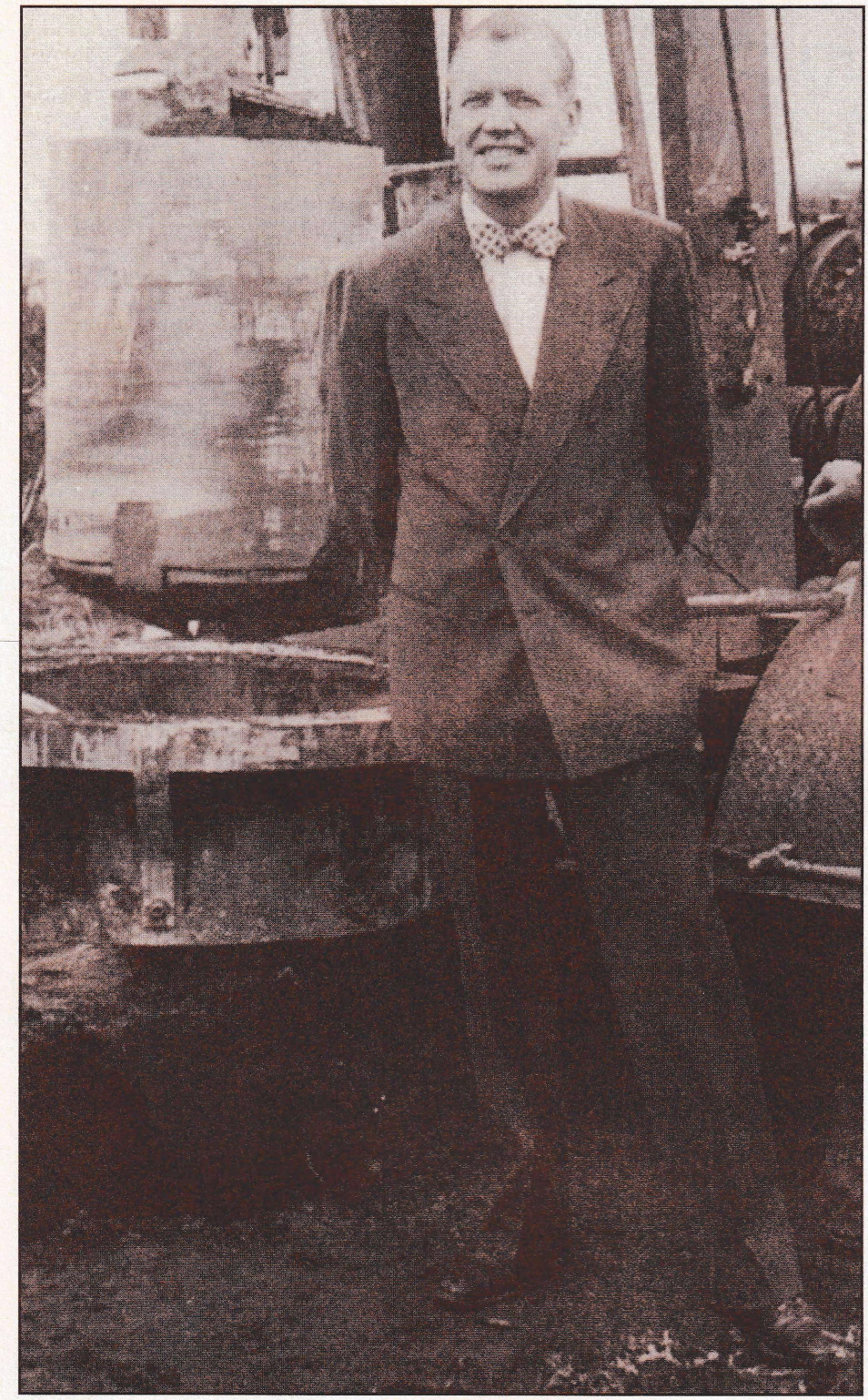


Dr. William Coffield, *President 1944 - 1951.*

Fred Snyde, Sr., *President 1953.*



Lemoin Beckman, *President, 1961.*



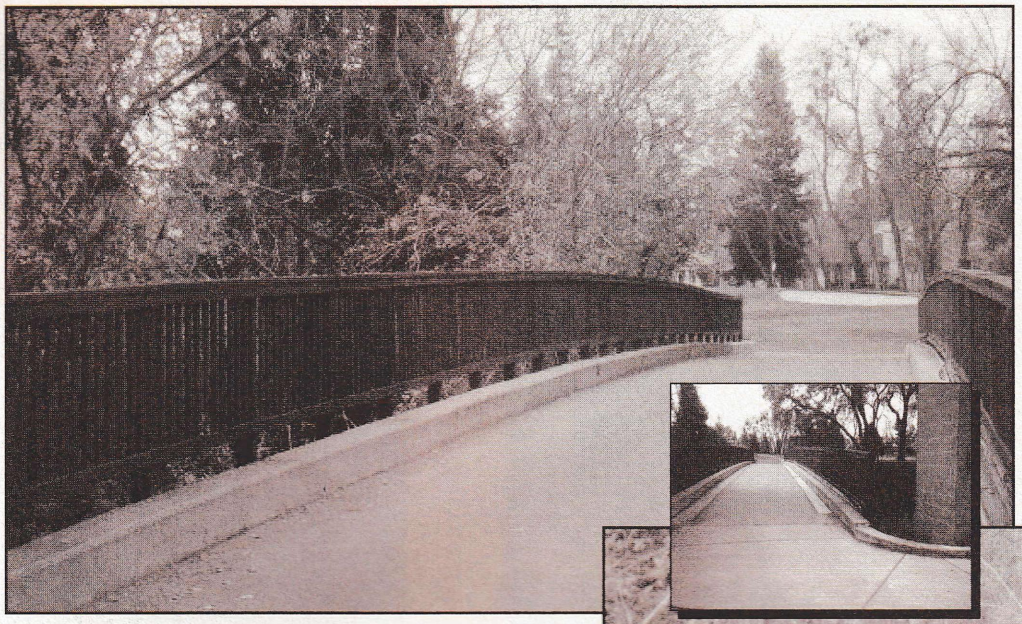
▲ *H. T. Woodworth, March 1948, President in 1952.*

suited to their endeavor was the northeast portion of the property adjacent to Lower Sacramento Road on the east and the south bank of the Mokelumne River on the west. Since the entire area was covered by a fairly abundant growth of Bermuda grass, which had been kept well clipped by Dick and Ben, two horses, the task of getting the tees and fairways in order was soon accomplished. A few scrub willows and wild rose bushes had to be removed.

The greens, however, presented a more formidable undertaking. The grass had to be cut short and raked several times before fine sand was floated in to create smooth putting surfaces. Tomato cans had been inserted into the greens to serve as cups, and the balls were teed up on mounds of wet sand and driven off ordinary door mats.

On the third Sunday of March, about 2:30 p.m., the hardy trio of Claude Holmes, Em Herrick, and Doc Hare decided the course was ready to play. A couple of tosses of a coin gave Em Herrick the honors, and with a mighty baseball swing, he teed off. History does not record who won the first game, but word of the fun and frolic at Woodbridge soon got around, and in a matter of two short weeks, the Lodi Golf Club had doubled its membership.

As the result of an expanding interest in the project, Holmes placed a notice in the Lodi Sentinel requesting that all those interested in golf attend a meeting in Beckman Hall on School Street across from the Hotel Lodi. Thirty zealous and hopeful



▲ *The current bridge, constructed in 1975, is a two-way concrete structure which permits taking golf course equipment across the river rather than using the less convenient Lower Sacramento Road.*

golfers turned out for this meeting from which was formed the nucleus of the Woodbridge Golf and Country Club.

There were about 23 members at this time. Some of the early participants were, in addition to those already mentioned, J.V. Bare, C.C. Woodworth, B.A. Towne Sr., Bill Dement, Norman Swim, R.C. Mixer, J.K. Newfield Sr., Mel Newfield, F.O. Smith, Percy Ritchie, George Chapdelain, Rodney Bridge, Dr. C.V. Thompson, Glen West, Walter Jahant, Col. Walter Garrison, and Glen Ayers.

It has been said that in the early days, it was not uncommon to own jointly a bag, a driver, a mid-iron, and a putter which was used by two members when they played. At this time, too,

▲ *Club employee Zack Strahlo checking the course.*

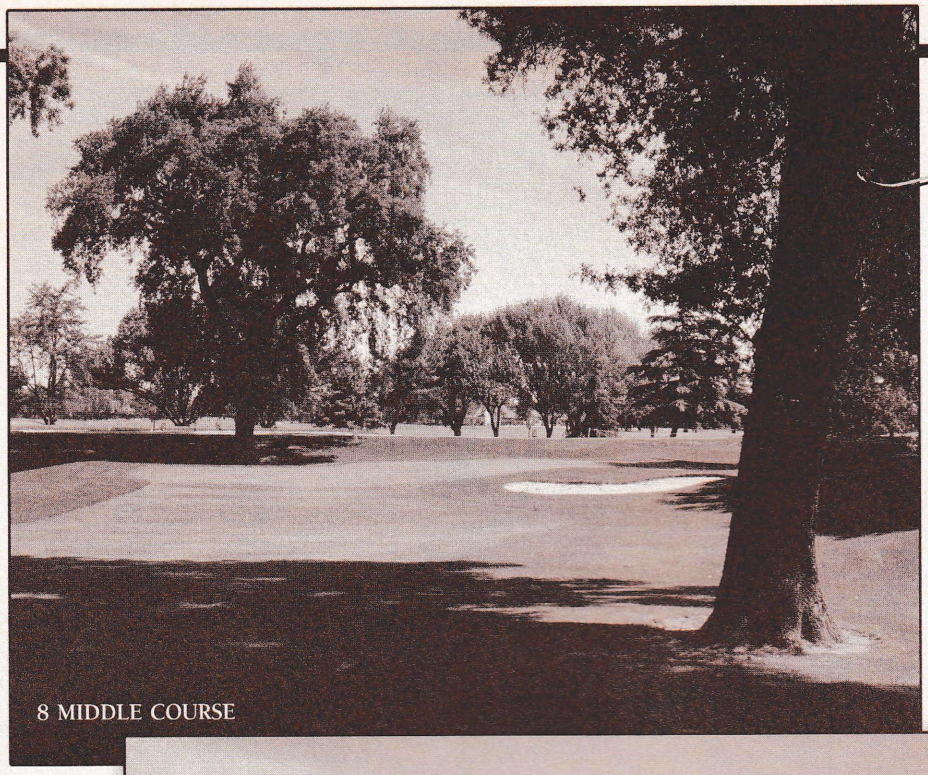
knickers were considered the fashionable golf attire.

Holmes had announced the plan for a golf club at the Lodi Lions and Rotary Clubs and by June 21st over 115 potential members had submitted applications at $10.00 each. It was decided to limit the charter list to 75 members. A month later, on July 24, 1924, the Woodbridge Golf and Country Club was incorporated. Entrance fees were set at $15.00 with dues at $2.00 per month. Glen West volunteered to act as attorney without remuneration, and the following officers and directors were elected: Claude Holmes, President; Walter Jahant, Vice President; Doc Hare, Secretary-Treasurer; Directors, Glen Ayers, W.H. Dement, C.C. Woodworth, J.K. Newfield,

▲ ***Clem Plecarpo**, President 1968-69, was instrumental in the current bridge construction.*

Grover Irey, W.C. Garrison, E.E. David, and G.L. Meisner.

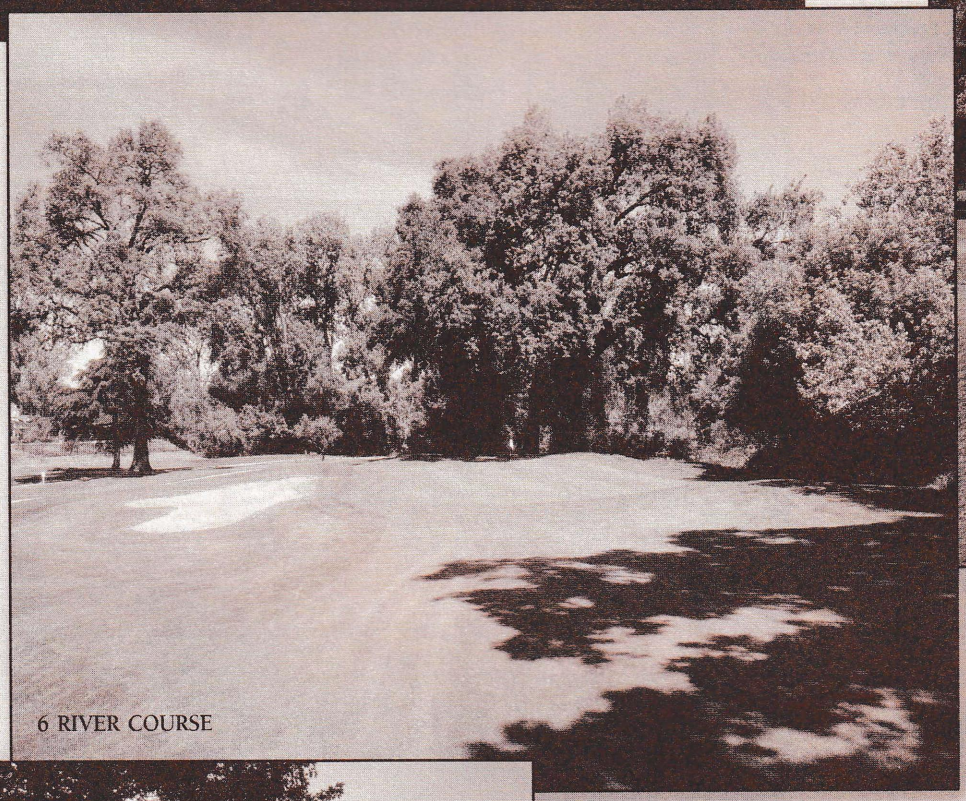
John Thompson, who had donated his property specifying it was to remain, for all time, a place of recreation, was made an



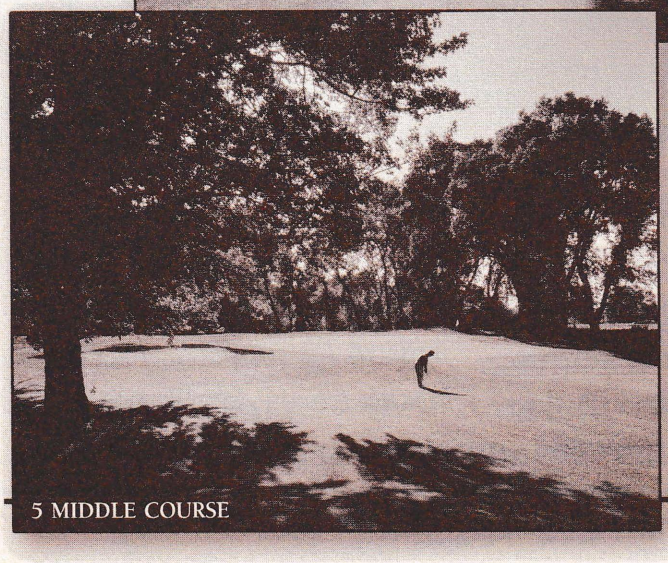
8 MIDDLE COURSE

Woodbridge G

5 MIDDLE COURSE



6 RIVER COURSE



5 MIDDLE COURSE

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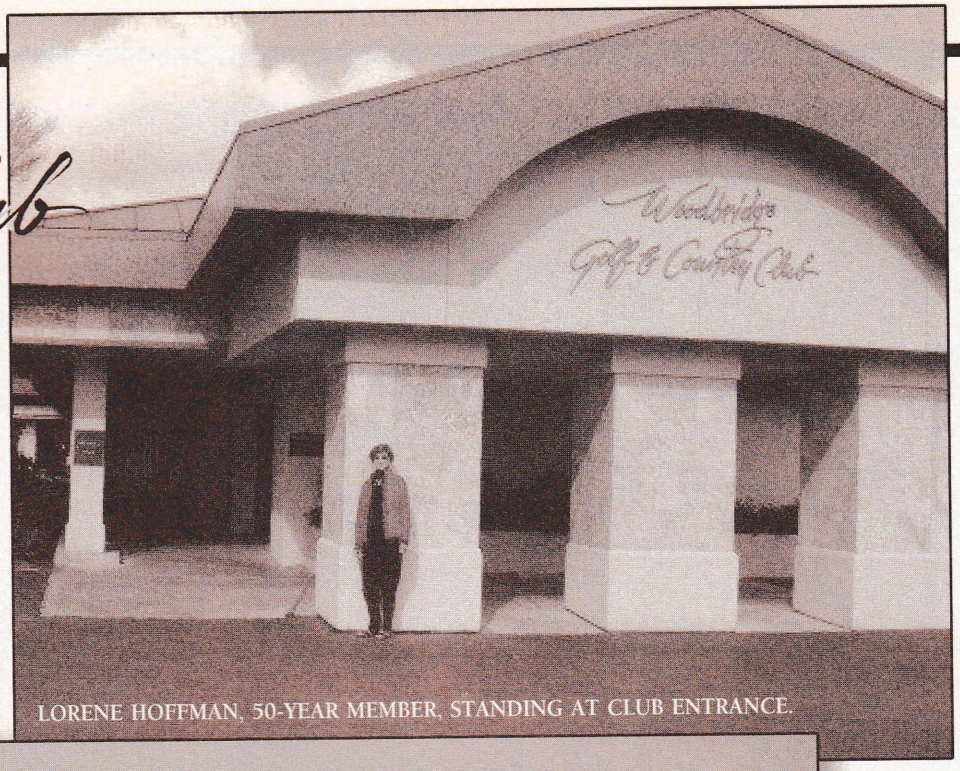
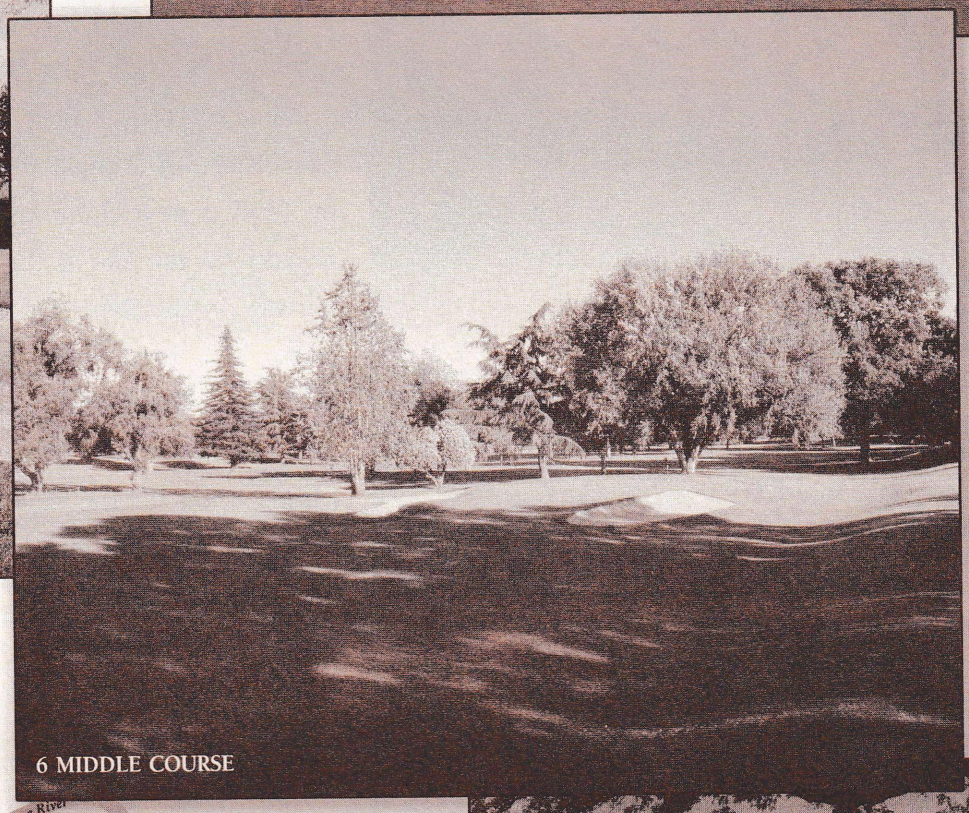


LORENE HOFFMAN, 50-YEAR MEMBER, STANDING AT CLUB ENTRANCE.



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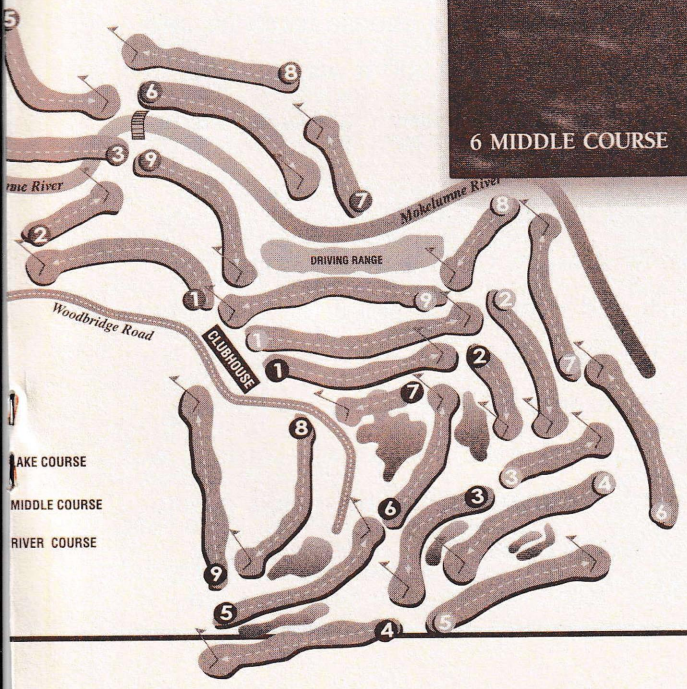
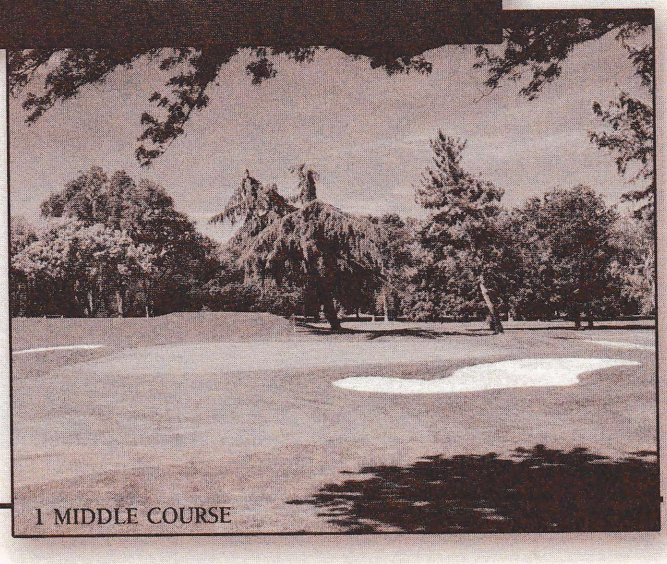




1 MIDDLE COURSE

▲ *Middle Course, #1 Green under construction, 1998.*

▲ *Middle Course, #1 Green under construction, 1998.*

▲ *Middle Course, #1 Green, #9 Tee, 1998.*

honorary member and issued membership number #1.

The 1920's were undoubtedly struggling years but, certainly, very formative ones. Five holes had been completed by June 19, 1924 and progress continued. By 1926, there were nine holes, "a pretty rough nine," the late Dr. William Coffield ruefully stated, "but there were nine holes!" A two room shack with a porch was erected to serve as the clubhouse, and Red Coleman was hired as the golf professional.

Information pertaining to the 1930's is very sparse, but certainly the Great Depression could not have facilitated the desire to move ahead with further expansion. But these pioneers were undaunted. They forged ahead. Dave Dillon had been hired as the golf professional in 1930, and by 1938, a new clubhouse had been built. It still remains as the site of the Elks Lodge (south of #5 fairway on the River Course). The tenacity of two ladies, Mrs. Fred Snyde Sr. (Addine) and Mrs. William Coffield (Faith) convinced the Directors a new clubhouse was needed and $6,000.00 was agreed upon for the new building. Mr. J. K. Newfield, member and local furniture store owner, accompanied Mrs. Snyde and Mrs. Carter (Cora) to San Francisco to choose furniture and other necessities. For $900.00 it was possible to decorate and furnish the new clubhouse, including silver!

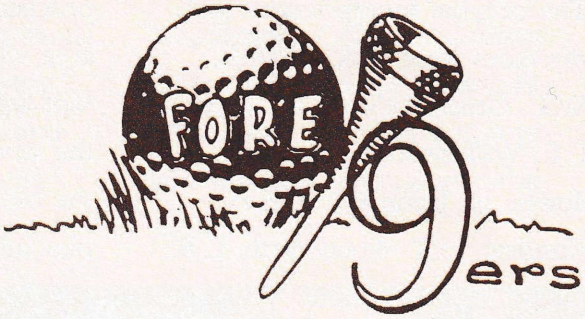
Food and beverage service was not available as we know it today. Golfers would bring their own lunch and it was understood the first lady to arrive at the club, or Blanche Dillon, wife of Pro Dave Dillon, would be responsible for brewing the coffee. Lockers were stocked with various and sundry items including, it has been said, a bottle or two of spirits for the cold weather. In due time, a Mrs. Terry was hired to prepare sand-

▲ *Welcome to Woodbridge Golf and Country Club.*

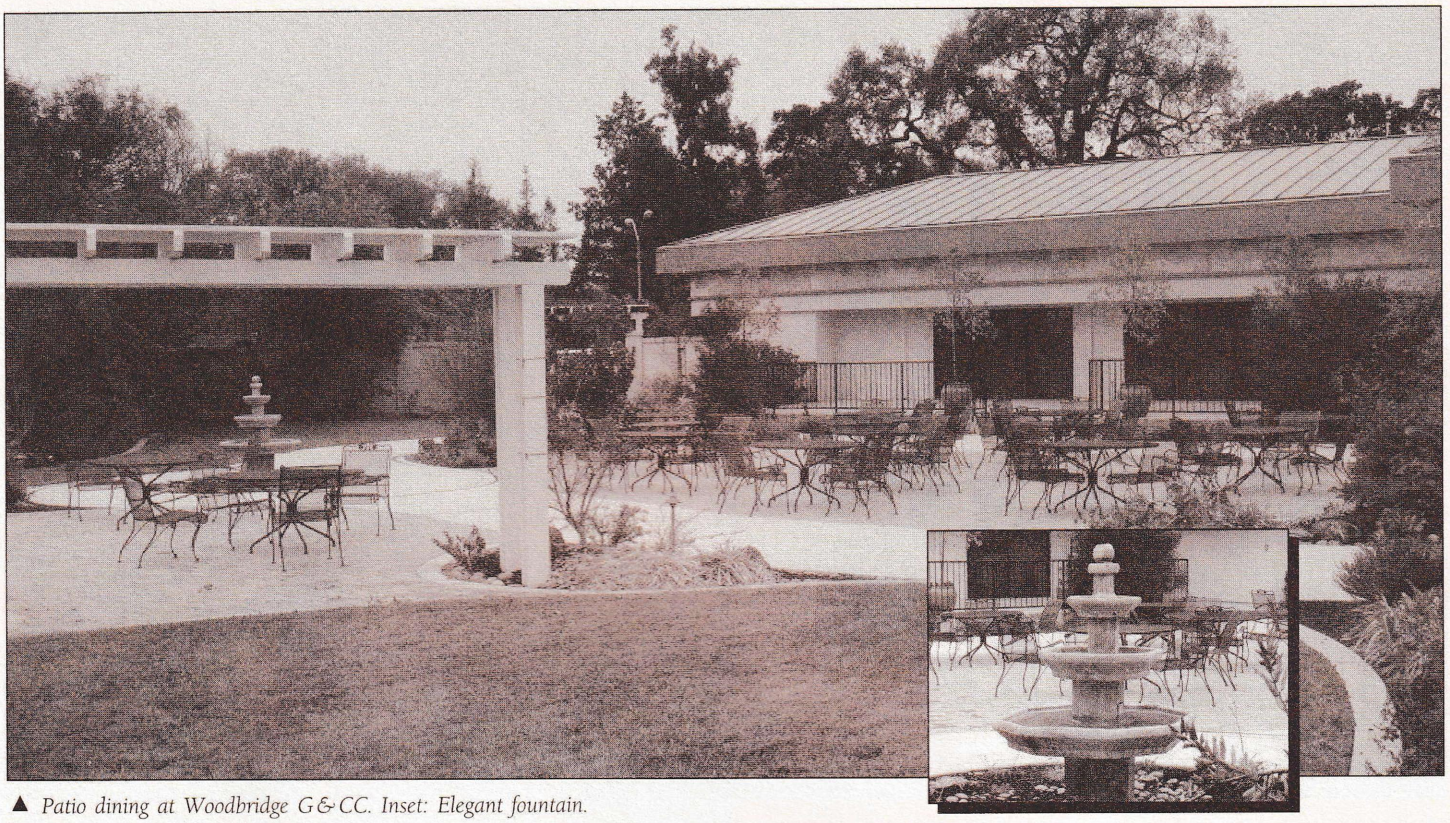
wiches and various other luncheon items. She was especially known for her very delicious homemade pies. You were assured of a piece of pie only if you arrived early enough to reserve it before teeing off.

In 1947, the clubhouse was ravaged by fire, necessitating a complete renovation of the interior. Over three years later the club suffered another setback when the banks of the Mokelumne River overflowed on November 21, 1950 inundating the golf course. Officers and members of the Greens Committee pitched in to clear away debris and scrape the greens which were subsequently rebuilt.

At the Annual Meeting, January 1951, Carl Wishek suggested the construction of an 18-hole golf course. A committee composed of Carl Wishek, as Chairman, W. C. Green, William Comartin, H. T. Woodworth, and Clifford Gatzert was appointed to investigate the project. Subsequently, the Mokelumne Land and Development (MLD) Company was formed to seek ways and means of attaining this objective.



▲ *Women's Team Play, 1958-59. Front row (l to r): Dottie Mullen, Addine Snyde, Lucy Walshe, Grace Adams, Betty Eachus. Back row (l to r): Hazel Pierce, Millie Campodonico, Adell Taylor, Lillian Krause, Millie Green.*



▲ *Patio dining at Woodbridge G&CC. Inset: Elegant fountain.*

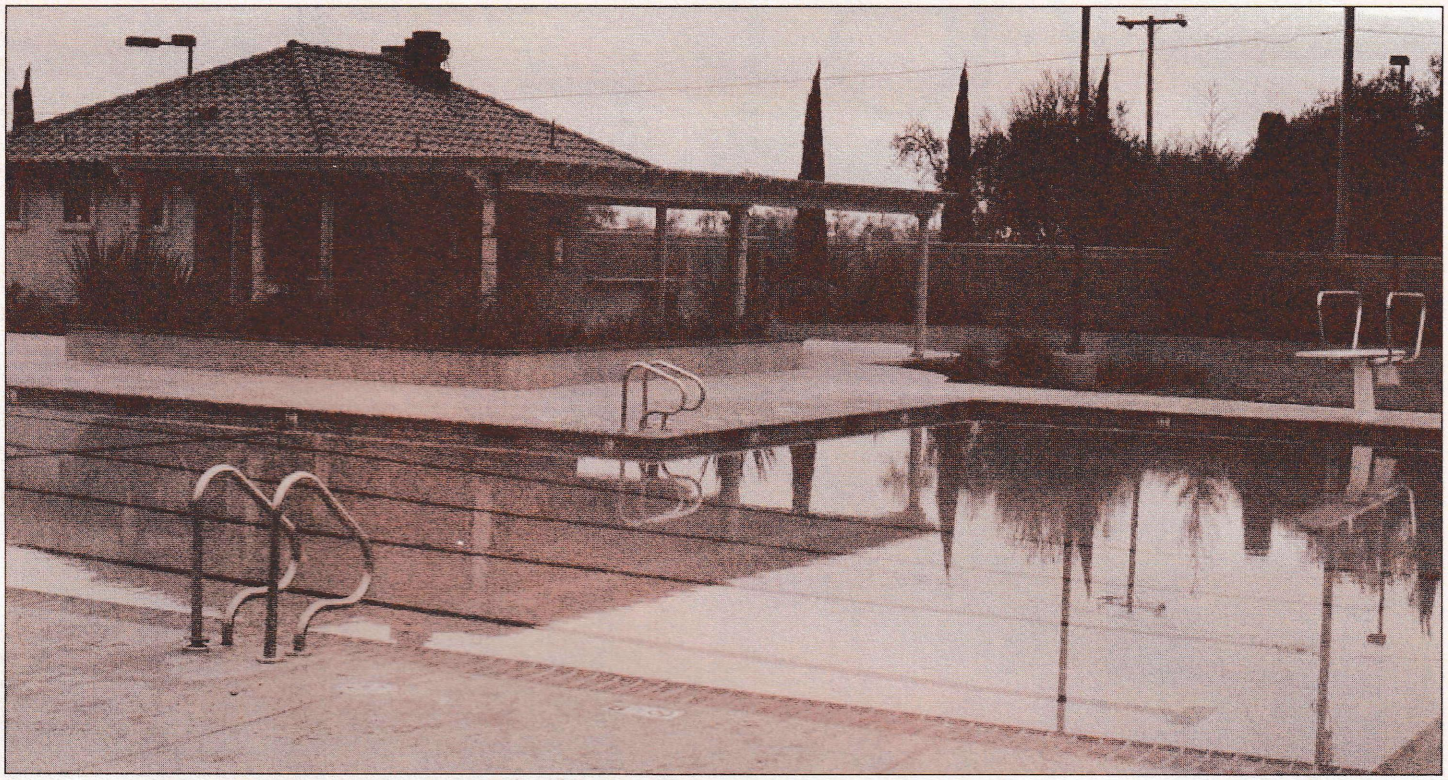
The original incorporators and directors were C. A. Wishek, W. C. Green, LeMoin Beckman, L. E. Wilkinson, O. H. Linde, B. A. Towne Jr., Jacob Kurtz, E. H. Kundert, H. T. Woodworth, L. B. Bridge, and R. E. Rode. This corporation sold 387 shares at $500.00 per share raising $193,500.00 which purchased the 33 acres north of the river from Jack Bare. The MLD then became the parent company and the country club operating company.

In 1952, construction began for a new 12 holes. Again, members came forward to lend their support. Mr. H. T. Woodworth, for one, brought in his Caterpillar tractor and disc and proceeded to cultivate the entire area which was covered with 4-foot high Johnson grass. By 1953, the new twelve holes, plus six of the old holes were opened for play and Woodbridge became an eighteen hole course. The first footbridge crossing the river was also built, and shortly thereafter, home development began on the north bank of the Mokelumne River. A membership drive was held to expand the membership to 400. The entry fee was increased to $200.00 and dues were $12.50 per month.

Everything went well for two years until the flood of 1955. The Mokelumne River again spilled mighty waves of muddy water carrying gigantic logs, pumpkins, squash, and even tame ducks onto the fairways. Dave Dillon, Golf Pro, and crews of workers labored long hours pumping water out of the clubhouse and rebuilding the course.

In 1956, members of the Country Club bought back the premises they had been leasing from the Mokelumne Land and Development Company with a plan to build another nine holes or a subdivision, or perhaps both. In 1957, with a membership of 500, a new clubhouse designed by architect Jack Lloyd, a club member, was constructed. The Grand Opening of the new clubhouse was held on September 1, 1957.

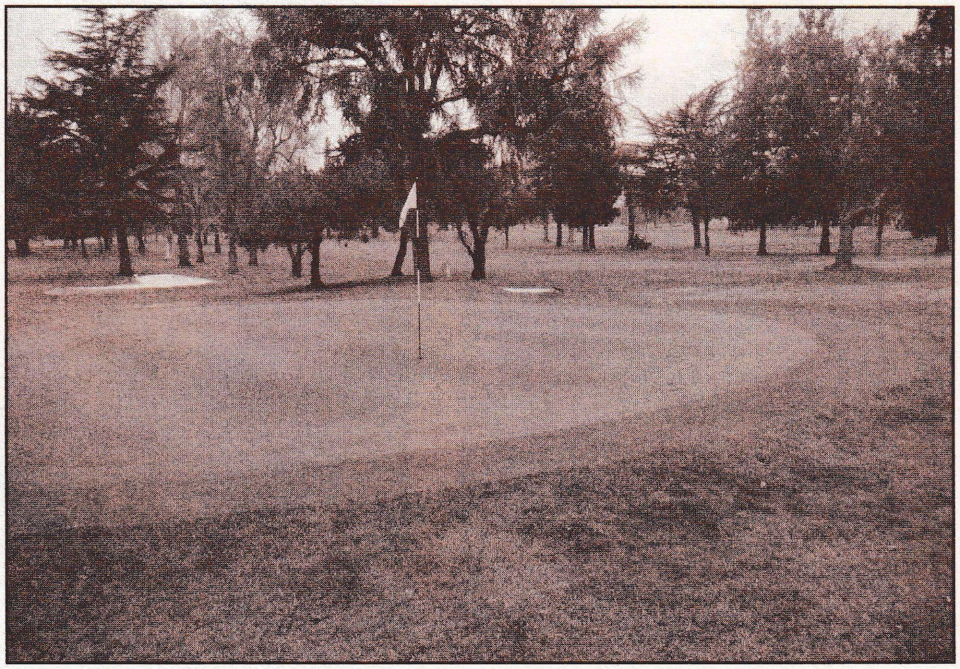
In 1967, Woodbridge Golf



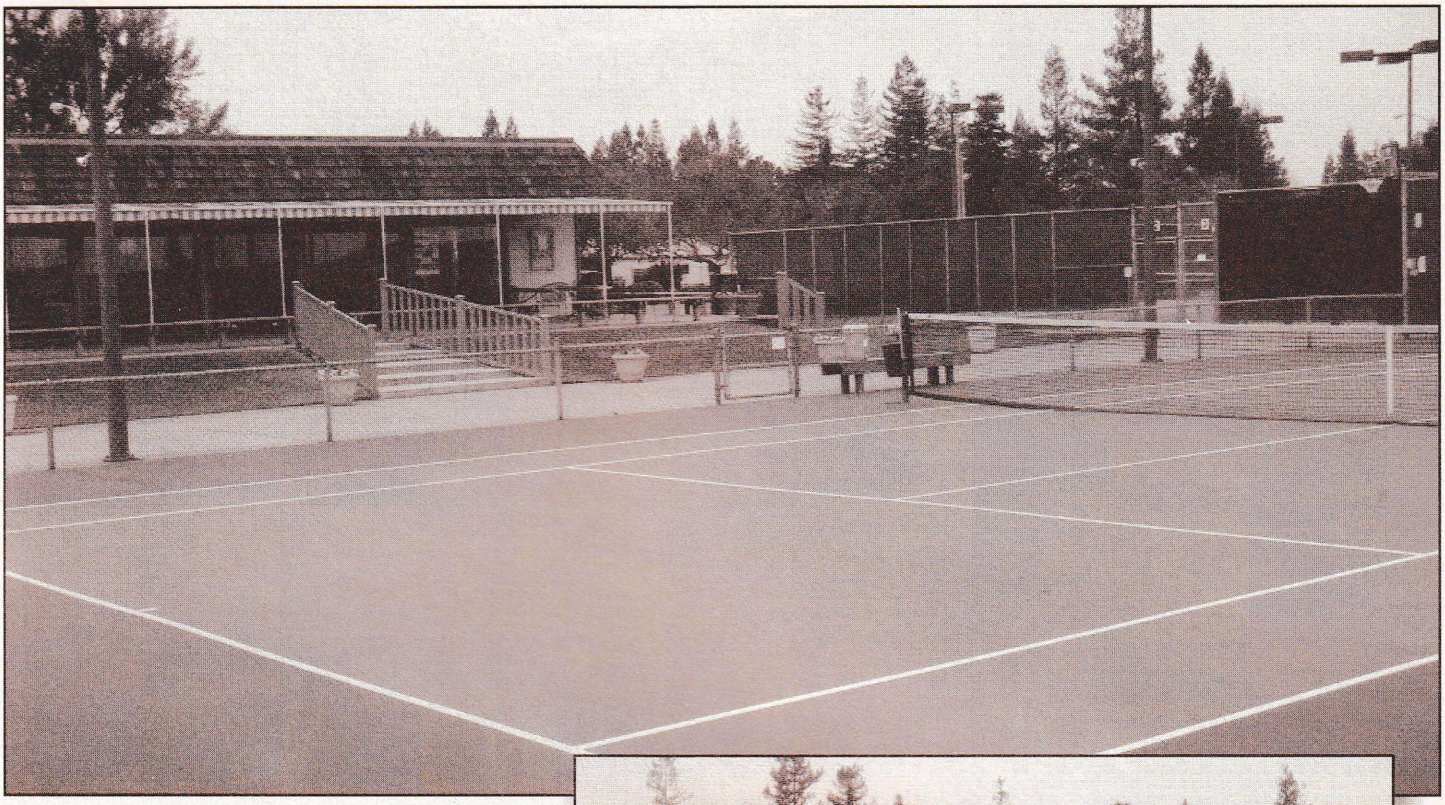
Woodbridge Golf & Country Club Swimming Pool. ▲

and Country Club purchased an additional 87 acres with an agreement that at least 52 of the 87 acres be used for recreational purposes. A planning committee was appointed to formulate a general and comprehensive plan for the overall development of the club and golf course. Seven tennis courts were built and landscaped in 1973, and Bert Stamps had been engaged to design an additional nine holes of golf which would make Woodbridge one of the few, if not the only, club in the area with a 27-hole golfing facility.

And so it is - from 1924 to today, the colorful and interesting early history is told. From what was for many years considered to be strictly a "golf club" has evolved into an outstanding family oriented recreational facility. Golf, tennis, aquatics, food and beverage facilities, and special events for all age groups in a wholesome environment makes Woodbridge Golf and Country Club a very unique facility. For information pertaining to memberships and options available, call 334-5454.



#9 Middle Course Fairway. ▲



▲ *Tennis courts at Woodbridge Golf and Country Club.*

▲ *Golf cart fleet.*

▲ *#8 Middle Courses Fairway.*

Historian References:

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Lodi News Sentinel

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